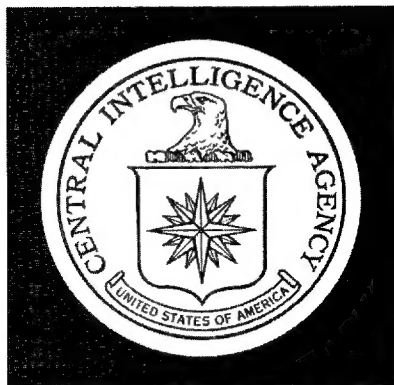


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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Information as of 1600
24 November 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Fighting is continuing over widespread areas of the central highlands.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Ambushes and mortar attacks over a wide area continue in the central highlands, as the enemy tries to relieve pressure on the North Vietnamese 1st Division west of Dak To (Paras. 1-8). US forces report killing 118 enemy soldiers in two clashes on 23-24 November, one in Binh Long Province and the other in central I Corps area (Paras. 9-11).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The new Democratic Bloc in the lower house has issued a six-point proclamation concerned primarily with the need for preserving Vietnamese sovereignty (Paras. 1-2). The Quakers in their yacht Phoenix are headed for Hong Kong, possibly to reapply for South Vietnamese visas (Para. 3). The moderate Tam Chau Buddhist faction may be establishing a Buddhist political party and setting up a daily newspaper (Paras. 4-5).

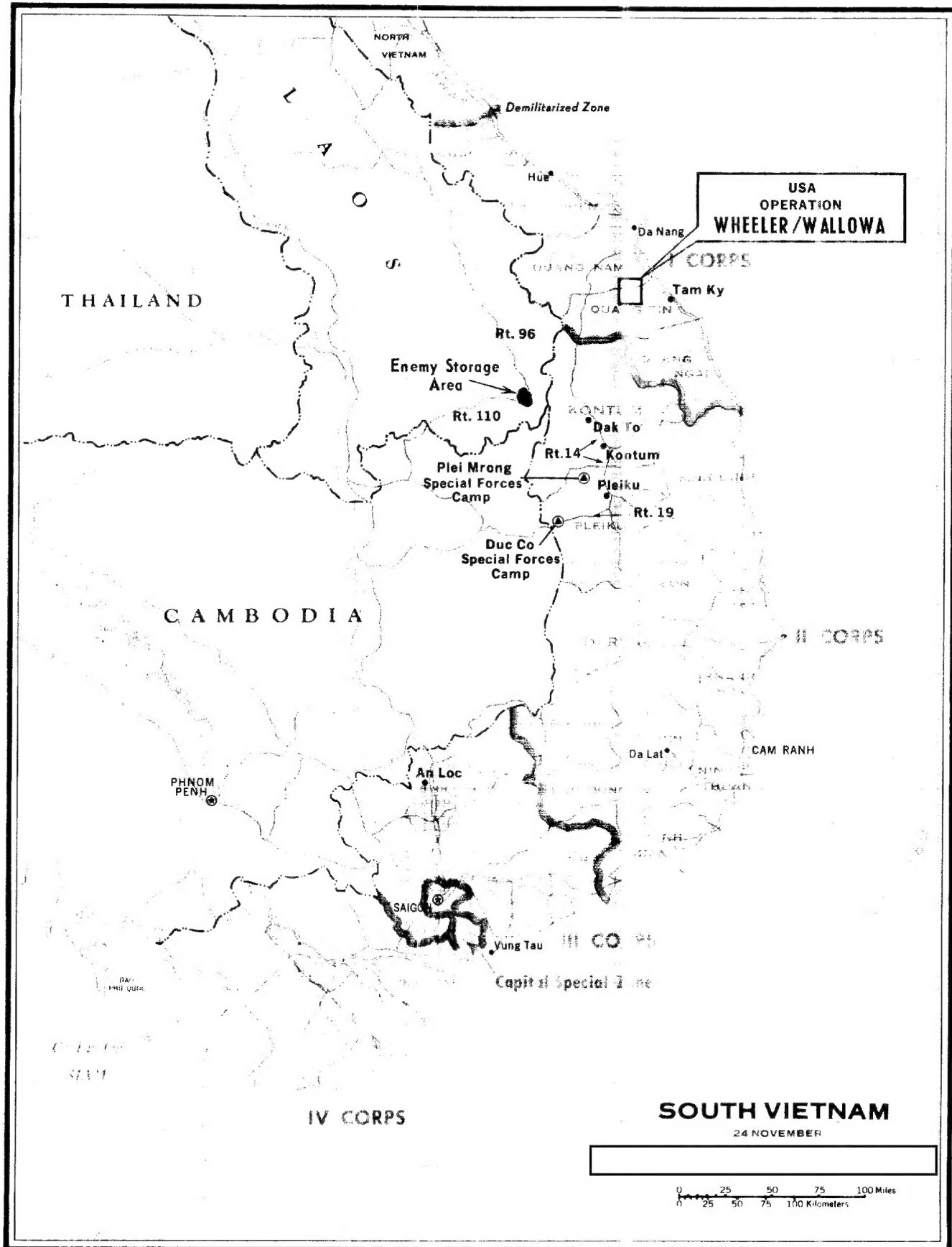
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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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VI. Other Major Aspects: The Doumer Bridge appears to be open to truck traffic again (Paras. 1-3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Enemy ambushes and mortar attacks continue over a wide area in the central highlands, partly in an effort to relieve pressure on the North Vietnamese 1st Division west of Dak To.

2. A US Army truck convoy, supported by helicopter gunships, fought through an ambush on Route 19 about two-and-one-half miles east of Pleiku on 24 November. Initial reports state that 32 enemy troops were killed and seven captured. Four US soldiers were reported killed and 11 wounded. The resupply convoy had started out at Qui Nhon on the coast of Binh Dinh Province.

3. On 22 November another enemy force, believed to be two squads of the 304th Viet Cong Local Force Battalion, ambushed a US Army convoy on Highway 14 between Kontum and Dak To. On 11 November this Viet Cong unit conducted an ambush in this same general area. Allied losses in these actions were light, but such tactics have hindered the resupply of Dak To.

4. In northwest Pleiku Province, some five miles northeast of the US Special Forces Camp at Plei Mrong, a US Army battalion command post was hit with 12 mortar rounds on 22 November.

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8. In a related development, an allied guerrilla team probing a known Communist base area 35 miles west of Dak To in the southeastern corner of Laos reported finding a "major truck delivery point and storage facility" on 21 November. Route 96, a major north-south artery in the Laotian corridor, and Route 110, which extends westward to Cambodia, both terminate at this point. The guerrillas claim to have destroyed tons of rice and salt and 1,000 rounds of recoilless rifle ammunition cached in the area. This base has undoubtedly been used by the North Vietnamese as a staging area for the recent Dak To campaign.

Operation WHEELER/WALLOWA

9. Sixty-one enemy soldiers were killed during an 11-hour engagement with US forces on 23 November in the Que Son Valley area of coastal Quang Tin Province some 16 miles northwest of Tam Ky. The enemy force was well entrenched in an extensive bunker complex and, when discovered, poured a heavy volume of automatic weapons and rifle fire on the advancing US infantrymen. US reinforcements, supported by close air support and artillery fire, forced the enemy to withdraw after dark. Seven US soldiers were killed and 36 wounded.

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10. The American forces were part of the ten-battalion search-and-destroy Operation WHEELER/WALLOWA, which has accounted for more than 2,235 enemy soldiers killed since the first phase began on 10 September. In contrast, cumulative American casualties now stand at 240 killed and 854 wounded in this long-term sweep against Communist main force units in the Quang Tin - Quang Nam Province border area.

Enemy Attack in III Corps

11. Early on 24 November, a field position of a company of the US 1st Infantry Division was attacked by an estimated 300-man Communist force in central Binh Long Province, some nine miles south of An Loc. The attack included more than 60 rounds of fire from B-40 grenade launchers and mortars in addition to intense small-arms fire. An early morning sweep of the surrounding area resulted in the discovery of 57 enemy bodies and 19 weapons. American casualties totaled four killed and 11 wounded.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The new Democratic Bloc in the lower house now calls itself the Democratic Alliance. It has issued a six-point proclamation concerned largely with Vietnamese sovereignty. According to a Saigon Post article of 22 November, the proclamation calls for social revolution, true national reconciliation, reform of both the educational system and the diplomatic service, the protection of Vietnamese sovereignty, and economic sovereignty.

2. In detailing each point, the proclamation criticized what it called "the policy of unilateral determination of the course of the war and peace efforts." In addition, as a step toward achieving economic sovereignty, the proclamation called for a review of the "entire problem of American aid." This new voice, added to the recent clamor for sovereignty and against "American interference," seems especially significant. The Democratic Bloc was generally considered progovernment, if not government sponsored.

Quakers to Hong Kong

3. The Quaker Yacht Phoenix appeared headed for Hong Kong on 23 November rather than south toward Vung Tau, as had been indicated earlier. The Quakers possibly intend to start anew the entire process of applying for visas in the hope that the misunderstanding which led Saigon to revoke their original visas has been cleared up.

Possible Moderate Buddhist Political Party

4. An article on 22 November in the Vietnamese-language newspaper Tu Do spoke of possible plans by the moderate Buddhist faction of Thich Tam Chau to form a political party. The paper labels it a "Buddhist democratic party." Although the paper apparently has nothing more than fragmentary reports and its own speculation, it cites as evidence "numerous meetings between venerables and pro-Buddhist

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political figures." The new party, Tu Do claims, will be nationalist-oriented and will have the benefit of a wealth of "operating resources." Considerable money--rumored to be some seven million piasters--will also be available to the Tam Chau faction for a daily newspaper the faction intends to publish, according to the article.

5. Tu Do speculates that these developments may signal the beginning of a "general counteroffensive" by Tam Chau in the moderate-militant dispute. Although the creation of an officially recognized political party would give Tam Chau a definite advantage over his rival, Thich Tri Quang, and would enhance his legal position, the US Embassy is doubtful of Chau's prospects for success. The embassy points out that Chau does not have a reputation as an effective organizer and, more importantly, most politically active Buddhist laymen have remained loyal to Tri Quang's faction.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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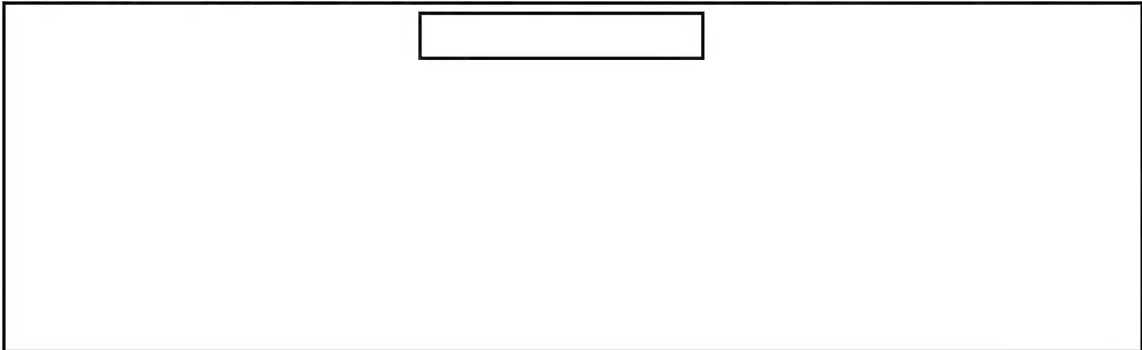
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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Paul Doumer Bridge on the main rail-highway route from China to Hanoi appears open to truck traffic again after being closed by bombing on 25 October.

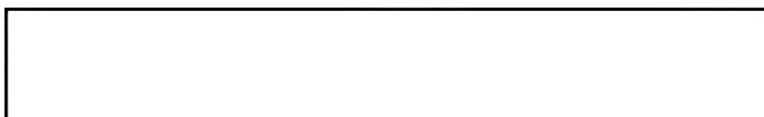


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3. The use of concrete spans for the latest bomb damage repair work suggests that the North Vietnamese may use this method for repairing future damage, and thus make quicker restoration of traffic over this key bridge possible.

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